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ABSTRACT

The School District Questionnaire described in this paper evolved from the Orangeburg (North Carolina) School District's plans to implement programs for improvement. The content-based questionnaire, which provides the school district with specific attitudinal feedback from parents, can be used for both pre- and posttesting following implementation of planned changes. It was developed by an evaluation team composed of curriculum specialists, test construction experts, and the district superintendent, with suggestions from parents, teachers, and school board members. The initial version of the questionnaire consisted of 55 negative and positive statements that were designed to elicit responses about parents' ideas of the ideal school system. A Likert scale of five follows each statement. Teacher reviews, pilot testing, and subsequent revisions of the instrument reduced the number of items to 51 in the final version. The initial version of the questionnaire, instructions to teachers involved in content validation, instructions to parents involved in pilot testing, and the final version of the instrument are attached as Appendices A through D. (LC)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PARENT ATTITUDINAL QUESTIONNAIRE AS A MEASURE OF SCHOOL SUCCESS

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in collaboration with

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PARENT ATTITUDINAL QUESTIONNAIRE AS A MEASURE OF SCHOOL SUCCESS

Parents and the entire school community are concerned about the success of the students in the school in terms of academic achievement. In the last few years many have perceived the school as losing sight of its mission. Academics, that is, training the mind, are slipping. There is neglect in the support areas for achieving academic success. Schools are being turned into centers for exposure to practices of which parents strongly disapprove. Study time is evaporating. Students no longer respect learning even though it is becoming increasingly necessary for professional success later in life. Their perceptions have some basis in fact. Indeed, state testing programs and the complaints of employers have identified deficiencies in the present educational program. For example, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills would so indicate, as well as would the South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program. Also, the people who matter--employers--are complaining.

In order for a school or school system to initiate programs for improvement, it needs a measure of present performance. Objective data like test results are important but probably the key to the evaluation process is subjective information such as the attitudes of parents and others involved with the school. It is important to point out that perceptions of other people sometimes

disagree with objective information but one must remember that the attitudes of individuals control the behaviors they manifest.

Because feelings are an integral part of the change process, the instrument which is described in this discussion evolved from the planning of one school district to implement programs for improvement. The instrument is devised to be administered to parents and teachers for assessment data about the school before the district eventually makes the indicated requisite changes. At the end of a designated period of time, the same instrument is to be used to determine the amount of attitudinal change.

Content-Based Item Development

An evaluation team composed of an early childhood curriculum specialist, a middle school curriculum specialist, and a secondary school curriculum specialist identified the following nine broad areas of concern: administration, curriculum, instruction, human relations, physical plant, transportation, personnel/ services and development, community involvement, and the overall effectiveness of the school board. A group of parents, teachers, and school board members identified specific topics (items) within each of the nine areas. The evaluation team also identified topics. All of these suggested items and comments were in written form and the team presented its written areas and items at a subsequent meeting of the superintendent, the evaluation team, and test construction experts. The group discussed the written suggestions and others, and finally outlined fifty-five specific questions. These were written in statement form with

eighteen sentences (approximately one-third) stated negatively and thirty-seven statements stated positively. The teachers and evaluation team examined the sentences for readability and face value.

The group devised a Likert scale of five for the fifty-five items by following each statement with the five choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. This initial version of the instrument is Appendix A.

Further Evidence of Content Validity

Five teachers were asked to read the instrument and make comments on the content of the items and wording. The teacher instructions are included as Appendix B. As a result of teacher comments the team rewrote eight items (7, 8, 9, 18, 28, 31, 43, and 48) for clarification. Items 7, 8, and 9 dropped the words "administration" and "administrators" which the teachers viewed as vague. Replacement terms were "central office," "superintendent and principals," and "superintendent, central office staff, and principals." Item 18 changed to identify the "equipment" as "teaching equipment (such as projectors, cassette recorders, and video recorders)." Similarly, the change in item 28 explains the term "parent education." Item 31 removed the word "arbitrarily" and explained its use, and item 43 identified "records" as "student records." Item 48 explained that "negative attitude" means "negative attitude toward the workplace." All of these changes were semantic and intended to clarify the meaning of the statement. No meaningful changes occurred in the actual item

content.

Pilot Testing

Twenty-one parents then took the scale with instructions which constitute Appendix C. They were asked to respond to the items in regard to the "ideal" school system in order to determine which qualities they considered important for a good school system (not those qualities which are present in their local schools).

The score results were (1) for Strongly Agree, (2) for Agree, (3) for Not Sure, (4) for Disagree, and (5) for Strongly Disagree. The results comprise Table 1.

Table 1 reports the mean (or average) response to each item across the 21 respondents. Means approaching 1.00 indicate Strongly Agree while means approaching 5.00 indicate Strongly Disagree. The evaluation team expected positively stated items to have means less than 3.00 (a 3.00 indicating Not Sure, anything less than 3.00 indicating agreement). Since one item, number 6, was a positively stated item obtaining a slightly negative response with a mean of 3.25, the team deleted it from the instrument. Similarly, negatively stated items were expected to have means greater than 3.00 indicating disgreeement. All negative items had means greater than 3.00. A single asterisk (*) indicates negatively stated items.

Further, results determined that items which had means near 3.00 would indicate uncertainty and subsequent deletion. In a conservative approach to determining inadequate proximity to the

Table 1

Mean Item Scores for the Pilot Testing of the Parent Attitudinal Questionnaire

n = 21

Item	Mean		Item	Mean	
1	1.38		36	2.79	**
2	4.19	*	37	4.62	*
3	1.38		38	1.52	
4	1.52		39	1.71	
5	4.24	*	40	1.81	
6	3.25	**	41	4.10	*
7	4.38	*	42	4.19	*
8	1.62		43	1.71	
9	1.71		44	4.57	*
10	1.55		45	2.48	**
11	4.67	*	46	1.71	
12	4.55	*	47	2.81	**
13	1.71		48	4.24	*
14	1.86		49	1.71	
15	4.48	*	50	1.90	
16	1.81		51	2.00	
17	1.81		52	4.24	*
18	4.24	*	53	2.05	
19	1.62		54	1.67	
20	1.57		55	4.43	*
21	1.67				
22	1.76				
23	4.10	*			
24	1.81				
25	1.76				
26	1.86				
27	4.82	*			
28	1.90				
29	3.71	*			
30	1.81				
31	3.76	*			
32	1.76				
33	1.81				
34	1.62				
35	4.24	*			

* Denotes a negatively stated item
** Items which were subsequently deleted

3.00 point, the team determined the standard error of the mean for the item with the largest standard deviation, which was approximately 1.06. Computed as $s/\sqrt{n}$, or $1.06/\sqrt{21}$, the maximum standard error was determined to be approximately .23. A confidence interval of three standard errors on either side of the 3.00 mark thus ranged from approximately 2.30 to 3.70. The team determined that items with means between these two points were of dubious importance and should be deleted. Items 36 (with a mean of 2.79), 45 (with a mean of 2.48), and 47 (with a mean of 2.81) subsequently ended in deletion from the instrument.

The final version of the instrument thus consists of 51 items. The new set of developed instructions accompanies the complete instrument as Appendix D.

Summary

The School District Questionnaire is designed as a content-based instrument for use at the district level. The instrument provides the school district with specific attitudinal feedback from parents. This type of information is particularly useful for districts interested in self-improvement and public relations. Interested persons may use the Questionnaire in setting up improvement programs and for continued monitoring of such programs.

Appendix A

Initial Version of the Questionnaire

SCHOOL DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please check the identifying information:

I am a ___ mother.

___ father.

___ teacher.

I have a child (or children) in (or I teach) in:

___ elementary school.

___ high school.

___ both.

Please respond to each of the following statements by circling whether you Strongly Agree, Agree, are Not Sure, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree:

1. The school board is representative of the community.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The school board discourages community attendance at board meetings.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. The school board is concerned with student needs.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. The school board explains school policy to the community.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. The school board and superintendent fail to work together.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. The school board makes rules and regulations for the administration, but does not get involved in running the schools.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. The administration ignores community needs.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. The administrators have firsthand knowledge of the community.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. Teachers support the administration.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. The administration follows policy made by the school board.

    Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. The administration hires unqualified and barely qualified people.

    Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. The administration misuses taxpayers' money.

    Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. The administration informs the community of school activities.

    Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. The administration uses teachers', parents', and community leaders' ideas in making decisions.

    Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. The administration is unfair and biased in dealing with staff.

    Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

16. The administration is continually making changes to improve instruction.

    Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. The administration encourages personal and professional growth of staff.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

18. Equipment needs repairing because the administration ignores maintenance.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

19. The administration is concerned about the mental, social, and physical well-being of students.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

20. The administration provides assistance to teachers to improve teaching methods and skills.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

21. Instructional objectives meet the needs of students.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

22. The school provides adequate materials and other resources for teaching.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

23. The school lacks a variety of activities, such as clubs, sports, publications, competitive activities, and special interest groups.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

24. Math and science are adequately stressed in the school curriculum.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

25. The curriculum objectives are identified and are well-defined.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

26. The school provides programs for exceptional students (such as special education, Chapter 1, gifted and talented programs).

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

27. The school fails to inform parents about the child's progress.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

28. The school provides opportunities for parent education.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

29. The teachers assign too much homework.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

30. Instruction is geared to learning basic skills.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

31. The teachers place students in materials arbitrarily.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

32. The teachers provide parents with instructional materials for students who need extra help.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

33. Teachers change teaching methods according to the students' needs.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

34. Teachers emphasize the ability to think.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

35. Teachers discourage creative thinking.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

36. The school uses volunteers in the instructional program.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

37. The school is a hostile and uncomfortable place to visit.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

38. Parents feel free to talk to administrators and teachers about their child.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

39. Students are encouraged to pursue courses according to their interests and abilities.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

40. Students, teachers, and parents feel free to express opinions.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

41. Children hate to go to school.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

42. The home is contacted only when the child is in trouble.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

43. The school maintains adequate records.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

45. The school attends sick children.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

46. The school provides parents with adequate information on students' national test scores.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

47. The school facilities are used for non-school activities.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

48. School personnel project a negative attitude.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

49. Parents attend school functions.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

50. The school furniture meets the needs of the students.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

51. The school building and grounds are attractive.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

52. The classrooms are run-down and unattractive.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

53. Students and staff take care of the school and equipment.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

54. Students are aware of the bus safety rules.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

55. The school buses are unsafe and poorly run.
Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Appendix B

Instructions to Teachers in Content-Validation

The school board and the administration are interested in improving the school system in Orangeburg School District #6 (North). Qualified professionals are developing a questionnaire to help determine the concerns and perceptions of parents and teachers. The school board and the administration need your help in this process.

You can help by reading the attached questionnaire. It is not necessary actually to answer each statement. Instead, as you read the statements, please make notes about any sentences you find ambiguous or difficult to understand. Also, you may strike out any statements which seem unnecessary. If you feel there are areas which have not been included in the questionnaire, the board urges you to please list them at the end of the form under "Comments."

The school board and the administration appreciate your time and effort in helping with this project. Your responses will be used in the ongoing effort to improve District #6.

Appendix C

Instructions to Parents in Pilot-Testing

The school board and the administration are interested in improving the school system in Orangeburg School District #6 (North). In order for the team to construct the instrument (questionnaire) for determining the concerns and perceptions of parents and teachers, the school board and the administration need your help.

You can help by responding to the attached questionnaire. In order to evaluate the instrument, you will need to imagine the perfect school system. All parts of this system work well; the children are learning and are happy. The children's scores on the Basic Skills Assessment Program are high. Read each of the statements on the questionnaire and ask yourself, "Is this a characteristic of the perfect school system?" Then respond by circling Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. The key to providing helpful responses is to remember not to answer with regard to how you feel about your school system, but what the perfect school system should be.

The school board and the administration appreciate your time and effort in helping with this project. Your responses will be used in the ongoing effort to improve the District #6 School System.

Appendix D

Final Version of the Questionnaire

ORANGEBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT #6 QUESTIONNAIRE

NORTH, SOUTH CAROLINA

The school board and the administration are interested in improving the school system in Orangeburg School District #6 (North). The school board and the administration need your help.

You can help by answering the attached questionnaire. Answer the questions honestly. You do not need to put your name on the questionnaire. There is space at the end of the questionnaire for you to make any further comments you may have concerning your school district.

The school board and the administration appreciate your time and effort in helping with this project. Your responses will be used in the ongoing effort to improve the District #6 School System.

Please check the following identifying information:

I am a ___ mother.

___ father.

___ teacher.

I have a child (or children) in (or I teach) in:

___ elementary school.

___ high school.

___ both.

DIRECTIONS: Please respond to each of the following statements by circling whether you Strongly Agree, Agree, are Not Sure, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

1. The school board is representative of the community.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The school board discourages community attendance at board meetings.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. The school board is concerned with student needs.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. The school board explains school policy to the community.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. The school board and superintendent fail to work together.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. The central office ignores community needs.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. The superintendents and principals have firsthand knowledge of the community.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. Teachers support the superintendent, central office staff, and principals.

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. The administration follows policy made by the school board

   Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. The administration hires unqualified and barely qualified people.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. The administration misuses taxpayers' money.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. The administration informs the community of school activities.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. The administration uses teachers', parents', and community leaders' ideas in making decisions.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. The administration is unfair and biased in dealing with staff.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. The administration is continually making changes to improve instruction.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

16. The administration encourages personal and professional growth of staff.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. The administration ignores repairing teaching equipment (such as projectors, cassette recorders, video recorders).

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

18. The administration is concerned with the mental, social, and physical well-being of students.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

19. The administration provides assistance to teachers to improve teaching methods and skill.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

20. Instructional objectives meet the needs of students.

Strongly Agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

21. The school provides adequate materials and other resources for teaching.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

22. The school lacks a variety of activities, such as clubs, publications, competitive activities, and special interest groups.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

23. Math and science are adequately stressed in the school curriculum.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

24. The curriculum objectives have been identified and are well-defined.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

25. The school provides programs for exceptional students (such as special education, Chapter 1, gifted and talented programs).

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

26. The school fails to inform parents about the child's progress.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

27. The school provides opportunities for parents to learn techniques which improve the children's achievement.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

28. The teachers assign too much homework.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

29. Instruction is geared to learning basic skills.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

30. The teachers place students in the same materials regardless of functioning level.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

31. The teachers provide parents with instructional materials for students who need extra help.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

32. Teachers change teaching methods according to the students' needs.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

33. Teachers emphasize the ability to think.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

34. Teachers discourage creative thinking.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

35. The school is a hostile and uncomfortable place to visit.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

36. Parents feel free to talk to administrators and teachers about their child.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

37. Students are encouraged to pursue courses according to their interests and abilities.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

38. Students, teachers, and parents feel free to express opinions.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

39. Children hate to go to school.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

40. The home is contacted only when the child is in trouble.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

41. The school maintains adequate student records.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

42. The school ignores problem behavior.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

43. The school provides parents with adequate information on students' national test scores.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

44. School personnel project a negative attitude towards the workplace.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

45. Parents attend school functions.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

46. The school furniture meets the needs of the students.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

47. The school building and grounds are attractive.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disageee Strongly Disagree

48. The classrooms are run-down and unattractive.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

49. Students and staff take care of the school and equipment.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

50. Students are aware of the bus safety rules.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

51. The school buses are unsafe and poorly run.

Strong Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

Comments: